The Mystery of Carneycroft

BY JOSEPH BROWN COOKE

CHAPTER I.

A Mystery Is Started.

That old John Carney dropped dead of apoplexy in his saddle while violently cursing the stable-boy for a trivial delay in bringing his horse to the door was not regarded by the community as any special cause for regret, but that the boy, who was kicked in the head by the plunging and terrified beast, died a few hours later, was looked upon in the village as little short of murder.

Young John was in Honolulu, presumably keeping a watchful eye on the family's sugar interests, but probably devoting himself to sociological studies and charitable work among the natives. Florence, the only daughter, was the mistress of her father's house, her mother having died in the early nineties. She was the only member of the family at home when the accident occurred.

She telegraphed immediately to me, I being the youngest and practically the only active partner in the firm of lawyers that managed her father's affairs. I responded at once in person and was at Carney-Croft by noon the next day.

I was astonished, not only by the extent of the place, but at its beauty and almost baronial magnificence. There were acres upon acres of velvety lawns intersected by miles upon miles of well-bedded roads and bridle paths, while the timber had been weeded out by a master hand so craftily that one was given the impression of an old and long inhabited estate rather than of a park hewn out of a virgin forest within a single decade.

The house was even more of a surprise than the grounds, for although it was, in some respects, scarcely finished, it was already moss-grown and ivy-clad and suggested a Jacobean structure of very respectable antiquity.

Miss Carney was watching for me at the entrance, and came running down the steps of the broad terraces surrounding the mansion, to greet me the more cordially as I clambered out of the old-fashioned trap that had brought me from the station.

"You were good to come so soon," she said gratefully, extending her hand with winning grace. "I wanted to send a carriage to meet you, but all the stablemen have left since the little boy died. I have only the house-servants that we brought from town."

I made the best answer I could under the circumstances for, while her recent bereavement was more than enough to excite my deepest sympathy, the fact that her father had been our best client for many years gave to my presence at the house a mercenary taint not exactly consistent with noblesse oblige.

Luncheon was served as soon as I returned from my room, and I was seated opposite my hostess at a small round table. I had never seen Miss Carney before and it cannot be denied that the vision of my sweet-faced companion, partly concealed by the palms between us, was in no way unappreciated by my masculine eye. After luncheon we sat in the library and talked over briefly the events of the past few days.

I had learned from my garrulous driver in the forenoon the circumstances that accompanied Mr. Carney's tragic death, and my interview with his daughter had more to do with the arrangement of her future affairs than with any references to the past.

"I wish Jack were here," she said, suddenly; "it is so hard to be alone."

"I cabled him as soon as I received your telegram," I replied, "and he can get a ship to-morrow or the day after. But must you be alone? Have you no friends here in the village?"

"Not one," she returned. "You know we live very much by ourselves out here and—and—the village people have never taken kindly to father—or—or—to me, for that matter. In fact," she continued, smiling wanly through her tears, "they think us worldly and purse-proud and—and 'stuck up,' if I must say it. And yet daddie tried to do so much for them, and laid out work that wasn't at all necessary and all that—just to give them employment. Why! last winter, when some of the people were nearly starving, he had ice cut in the river and piled up on the banks for weeks at a time to keep the men busy, but as soon as the warm weather came they forgot it all and even said he was a fool who threw away his money. No," she added slowly, "I haven't a friend in the village to whom I could turn."

"But there must be someone," I insisted; "somebody who could come here and stay with you until your brother returns."

She rested her elbow on the chair arm for a moment and pressed her hand against her temple. Then, raising her head quickly with a satisfied air, she exclaimed:

"Why, yes! I could send for Annie Weston, and she would be delighted to come! It would do the poor girl good, too," she added thoughtfully; "she has been ill so long and is just beginning to improve. That's exactly what I'll do!"

"Who is Annie Weston?" I asked with interest, for the idea seemed to have brought new hope into her eyes, and I was glad that it had come from my suggestion.

"Oh!" she was a school friend of mine and is the sweetest girl that ever lived," returned Miss Carney. "Her father and mother are both dead and she is quite alone in the world, so she can come just as well as not, and I know she will love to be here as much as I will to have her. I should have asked her to visit me long ago, but she was taken ill soon after we left school and is only beginning to get back her strength."

The day after the funeral I returned to the city and, rather than subject Miss Carney to any inconvenience by accepting her offer of the only carriage at her disposal since the stable hands had deserted the place, I rode to the railway station in the trap that had brought me down.

"So you're old Carney's lawyer, be ye?" inquired my driver, with rustic familiarity, crossing his legs and leaning one arm carelessly over the back of the seat in front of me.

I admitted that I was, with monosyllabic brevity, and we proceeded in silence for a few rods.

"'Spose he left plenty o' money?" was the next query.

"Enough for the needs of his family," I replied.

"Pshaw!" he returned, in evident disgust, "that's all ye'd say if he was worth ten thousand dollars!"

Another short period of silence elapsed, and then he began abruptly: "Powerful strange to me haow a drinkin' man like him could accoomilate so much money an' hold to it so tight."

"I never knew that Mr. Carney was a drinking man," I replied, with a sudden interest in my companion's gossip. "I mean," I continued, "I never knew that he drank to excess."

"Drink!" exclaimed the man. "Why! they wa'n't nuthin' he wouldn't do! Drink, smoke, gamble an' cuss, besides throwin' away his money on most wasteful things! When Sam Hoskins' boy was workin' up to the place he seen him an' another feller frum the city, a friend o' his'n, a-playin' poker one day, an' one or t'other of 'em, I fergit which 'twas, lost seven dollars an' 80 cents! An' as to drinkin', while he done most of it in the haouse, he wa'n't above takin' a glass at Hoskins' hotel every naow an' then, too!

"I rec'lec', one day, a-settin' on the stoop at Hoskins' waitin' fur a shaower to blow over, when I was a-gittin' in my hay, an' ole Carney drove up in his buggy. We was all a-talkin' abaout Freemasons, an' as he climbs nout I sez to him, sez I, 'Be you a Freemason?' sez I. 'No,' sez he, 'I hain't,' sez he, 'but I'm a free thinker,' sez he, 'an' I think I'll take a drink,' sez he. 'Ye won't be a free drinker,' sez Hoskins, under his breath and winkin' at me, as he follers him into the barroom to wait on him, an' sure enough, he

"I'm A-Gittin' to That," He Replied.

tole us afterwards, he charged him reg'lar city prices, an' the ole man never knew the difference."

"By the way, what made the men leave the place so suddenly?" I asked, cautiously, thinking to divert the fellow's gabble into more profitable channels. "You know they have all gone, except the servants that were brought from the city."

"Wal," said the man with deliberation, slapping the horse's back with the reins and wriggling uncomfortably in his seat, "they left fur two reasons, I guess. In fac', the folks 'baout here ain't over anxious to work up to the place anyway, though they was allus willin' to be obligin' an' accommodate ole Carney when they wa'n't nuthin' else fur 'em to do; but naow, it's comin' on hayin' time, an' I s'pose they'd ruther work at hayin'."

The man had turned his back on me completely and was urging the horse forward at a rapid gait.

"Very generous of them to accommodate him when they had nothing else to do, and then leave his daughter as they have, just because haying time is here," I commented. "But you said there were two reasons. What is the other?"

We rode on in silence for quite a distance until, at length, the fellow responded in a gruff voice and without turning his head.

"Wal! it may be true an' it may be not! All I know is what I heerd up to Hoskins'. I don't take no great notice o' ghosts an' sich. But them men knows what they seen the night after the Widder Bruce's boy died, an' I know that ye couldn't git one of 'em on the place again with a team o' steers! No, sir! knowin' as they do, the character o' man that ole Carney was, an' the way he as good as murdered that poor lad with his cussin' an' quarrelin' an' fallin' off his hoss, 'stead o' goin' to the stable an' saddlin' up himself, like any man would that wa'n't too lazy to take off his coat when he et, it ain't no wonder they believed what the Widder Bruce tole 'em more'n a year ago!"

He paused here and flicked a fly from the horse's neck with a dexterous cast of his whip.

"What did the Widom Bruce tell them?" I asked anxiously, fearing that his communicative mood would leave him.

"Wal, she come over here from England with her boy 'baout the time ole Carney was a-buildin' his haouse, an' she sez, as soon as she seen it, that it was goin' to be jest like them places over in England where them dooks an' sech fellers live, that sooner or later someone 'ud die a vi'lent death there, an' then the place 'ud be ha'nted same's the dooks' places mostly is.

"O' course, we didn't pay no special attention to her.

"When her boy went up to the place to work, 'baout a year ago, she took on terrible, an' allus said no good 'ud come of it, an' that somethin' would surely happen. But they wa'n't no other way out of it, fur they didn't have a bite to eat nor a rag to wear, an' if the boy hadn't decided to accommodate Carney's folks I guess they'd ha' starved.

"Ye see," he continued, in explanation, "old Carney wouldn't never give a cent to anybody that was able to earn it, an' when the parson come to him an' ast him to help the widder, all he sez was, 'Send that big hulk of a boy up here an' I'll give him a job an' good pay so'z he kin support his mother like a man,' he sez, 'but I won't give her a damn penny so long as he's able to work an' earn it,' he sez."

"But you haven't explained yet why the men left," I persisted, for we were nearing our destination and my time was growing short.

"I'm a-gittin' to that," he replied. "Ye see, Carney was such a mean, stingy cuss that, what with his drinkin' an' gamblin' an' other vices, the widder allus claimed he'd never rest easy in his grave. When the boy was killed she carried on like a crazy woman, an' swore the place would allus be ha'nted 'less the estate did the honest thing by her an' give her enough to pay her fur the loss of her son. That night, more fur fun than anything else, a lot of the fellers that was a-settin' daown to Hoskins' went up by the haouse 'raound midnight, but they didn't see nuthin'. The nex' night—that's after you come—they all went up again, an' I tell you they all come back a-flyin'."

"What did they see?" I asked, with renewed interest, as a sudden idea entered my head.

"That's more'n I know," said the man, turning and looking me squarely in the face, "but they said they seen two ghosts, one fur the old man, an' one fur the boy, aout under the trees in front of the haouse right where ole Carney fell off his hoss! Every one of 'em seen the same thing, an' when nine men agrees to a dot on a thing o' this kind it's pretty hard, even fur a church member, not to believe it.

"They'll all tell ye the same story. The boy was a-swayin' back an' forth, jest as he did after the hoss kicked him, an' the ole man kind o' hoverin' an' bendin' over him like he was in the saddle a-cussin' him again. The figgers was perfectly plain, all in white, but them that stayed to look long enough said ye could see the trunks o' the trees an' other things right through 'em, too."

"I suppose they all came back to Hoskins' after seeing this wonderful sight," I remarked.

"You bet they did, an' they come a-runnin', too," said the man. "I never seen a scarder lot o' men in my life."

"Made pretty good business for Hoskins that night, eh?" I ventured.

"Wal, I guess it did!" he rejoined, with a grin. "An' it'll keep right on makin' good business fur him, too! Them fellers won't git over talkin' o' that fur a month o' Sundays!"

"How did they get home that night?" I continued persuasively.

His grin broadened as he chuckled. "Them as couldn't walk had to ride home in this 'ere rig. Haow I ever piled so many in is more'n I kin tell!" and he laughed immoderately at the thought.

"So when business is good with Hoskins it's likely to be good with you, too, eh?" I went on.

"Most ginerally," he replied. "Most ginerally; 'less Hoskins gits all their money 'fore they're ready fur me an' their credit ain't no good."

"And when the men aren't working at Carney's they spend a good deal of time at Hoskins', don't they?" I asked.

"Yes, an' a good deal o' money, too," he rejoined. "Ole Carney allus paid 'em well; nobody can't deny that."

"So it's a good thing for Hoskins and a good thing for you, to get them away from the place every little while," I suggested warily.

"I s'pose it is, an' I s'pose we can't neither of us help it if they want to leave," he returned sullenly and with sudden suspicion as he pulled his horse up sharply at the station platform.

My train arrived in a few moments, and as I was about to step aboard I drew the fellow toward me and said to him in a low tone, that others might not hear:

"The men were quite right about the ghosts. I saw them myself, from my window, perfectly distinctly and exactly as you have described them."

The car was already moving and I swung up on the step and left him standing bewildered.

CHAPTER II.

Two Letters.

My Dear Mr. Ware:

My apologies for not replying to your letter of nearly two weeks ago are weakened by the fact that I am now writing to you in great distress.

My brother will be here day after to-morrow, and it has just occurred to me that I have made a most dreadful blunder and I need your advice more than ever before.

You know, I asked Miss Weston, my old school friend, to come here and stay with me for a time at least, and she did so, understanding, as I have since learned, that Jack was away and not to return.

She is here now and seems to me to be quite ill again, but the embarrassing part of it is that she and Jack was once great sweethearts, and his going away to Honolulu was really due to some disagreement that they had nearly three years ago. I never knew just what the trouble was. As Annie was my dearest friend in school and afterwards, too, I quite overlooked the whole matter in my anxiety to have someone with me when I was so awfully alone. You remember, I merely telegraphed her to come, and she did not even know of father's death and supposed, of course, that Jack was away.

Now she is too ill to go home again, and Jack is coming so soon that I don't know what to do. It is a fearfully embarrassing position to be placed in, especially as there was so much mystery over their separation.

You see, under the circumstances, I cannot possibly adopt your suggestion to close the house and come to town for the present, and, anyway, I feel that I ought to stay here till Jack comes to keep an eye on father's things.

Miss Weston is, I am sure, quite too ill to be moved, and with Mrs. Remsen, our old housekeeper, I feel perfectly safe.

Please write me at once and advise me in my present predicament.

Very truly yours,
FLORENCE CARNEY.

P. S. There is a rumor that Carney-Croft is haunted, and some of the village people even go so far as to say that you saw a ghost when you were here. Have you heard anything of this sort? It is ridiculous, of course, but it makes me nervous. F. C.

My Dear Miss Carney:

Your letter of yesterday is at hand. I would not worry, if I were you, about your brother and Miss Weston. It was probably some childish affair that they have both forgotten by this time.

I am sorry to hear that Miss Weston is ill again, for it must add to your cares materially, but as you have told me that all your house servants are reliable and trustworthy I suppose you are managing fairly well.

I expect your brother in town to-day or to-morrow and he will probably stay here over night and go on to Carney-Croft the next day. Either he or I will telegraph you as soon as he arrives.

I thought you knew about the ghosts or I should have written you before. There were two large pieces of mosquito netting in my room which were apparently intended for covering portraits. I threw them over a chair-back near the window and they blew out during the night and caught in the branches of the trees in front of the house. I knew that some of the men from the village had seen them and taken them for ghosts, but as I myself saw your butler pulling them down early the next morning I supposed the whole story had been explained to the satisfaction of everybody.

Very sincerely yours,
FREDERICK WARE.

CHAPTER III.

John Carney.

As Mr. Carney was ushered into my private office I rose to greet him, and stepped from behind my desk with outstretched hand; but as he raised his face to mine I drew back in amazement and disgust and motioned him to a chair with scant ceremony.

"Drunk! the beast!" I muttered to myself, as he shambled drowsily to the seat I had indicated and dropped into it with a thickly uttered "Thank you."

He seemed to fall asleep for a moment, and I eyed him steadily for some time before I could bring myself to speak. And so the handsome, straightforward, manly fellow of three years ago had sunk to this! A sodden, degraded wretch, unfit to associate with pigs in a sty, and yet the heir to a vast estate and the sole legitimate protector of the sweet-faced orphan at Carney-Croft who awaited his coming with the impatience born of love and hope and confiding trust! God help the poor girl now, and God help the accursed wreck that sat opposite me!

His heavy breathing wheezing in and out of his throat; his listless, stupid face, flushed and mottled from the effects of his excesses; his body, dripping with perspiration which stood out in beads on his forehead and glistened on his hand as it lay in the sunlight; and his drooping, blood-shot eyes, now half closed and again wandering aimlessly about the room; all combined to make a disgusting picture. It was with the utmost difficulty that I could restrain my feelings sufficiently to address him with ordinary civility. Finally, my judgment prevailed over my indignation, and I remembered that I was the legal adviser, only, of the house of Carney, and not in any way concerned with the moral conduct of its head.

"You had a comfortable journey, I hope," I remarked icily.

"As comfortable as such a journey can be," he wheezed, turning his bleary eyes toward me as he spoke. "The conditions which made my home-coming necessary did not make my trip enjoyable, and I traveled with the greatest possible haste, as there are certain matters that I want you to arrange for me at once."

He spoke his words with a force and precision unusual in a man in his condition, but he was evidently controlling himself to the utmost degree and, as he talked, his face flushed in great blotches, his blood-shot eyes seemed almost bursting from his head, and the perspiration oozed from his body and trickled in little streams down his cheeks and neck.

"Do you wish to hear any of the details of your father's death?" I asked in a most matter of fact tone.

"No, thank you," he said, with some effort. "I found a long letter from Florence at my hotel this morning and she has told me everything. I wish merely to arrange some money affairs with you and make my will, and I wish to do so at once."

"How much money do you need for the present?" I asked, sarcastically.

"How much money do I need?" he repeated, in a bewildered tone. "Why I don't need any. I have all the ready cash that I want. I only want to arrange for the future, you know."

"Very glad to hear it," I observed dryly. "Now, as to your will. Do you think, Mr. Carney, that your state of mind to-day is such that you are quite ready to make a will? Would it not be better for you to wait a day or so until—er—until you have had an opportunity to rest from your journey and your—ahem—your health has improved somewhat?"

I regretted my words on the instant. In spite of the man's condition, they seemed to have cut him to the quick. An expression of anguish, pitiful to see, passed over his face and his whole body trembled. After a moment he said slowly with the same wonderful self-control:

"My health, as you choose to call it, Mr. Ware, will not improve to any appreciable degree, and my mind is, at this moment, as clear as it will ever be. I wish you to draw up a will leaving everything I possess to my sister, Florence Carney, and I wish, also, to give you power of attorney so that from this time on, you can conduct the estate in my stead and supply her with such funds as she may need. I do not expect to spend much time at Carney-Croft and I want these matters attended to now, before I go there at all."

His ideas were so thoroughly in accord with his duty to his sister that I was now anxious to carry them out at once as he requested, lest another opportunity might never occur. It took but a short time to arrange the details of the will, and then it and the power of attorney were signed by him in a trembling hand and witnessed by

"I Am Going to Carney-Croft To-Night."

members of my office staff.

When these formalities were over and we were alone again, Mr. Carney said abruptly:

"I am going to Carney-Croft to-night and have wired Florence to have a carriage for me at the midnight train and not to sit up. I don't expect to stay there long, and I should think it would be better to close the place and have her take a house here in town where she would be more comfortable."

"I made the same suggestion myself," I replied, "but she wrote that she felt perfectly safe at home, and that she wanted to remain until you came to take charge of things. As you have turned all such responsibility over to me, as your attorney, there is but one thing now to prevent her leaving."

"What else can there be?" he muttered thickly.

I watched him closely as I answered. "Do you not know that her friend, Miss Weston, is with her?"

"What! Annie Weston there!" he exclaimed. "Is she well?"

"No," I replied, studying him. "She is not at all well. In fact, she is too ill to be moved, and that is why Miss Carney cannot close the house at present."

"I never dreamed that Annie Weston would be in my house," he whispered, as if to himself. "Poor girl! Poor girl!"

"When Miss Carney asked her to come, Miss Weston did not know that you were to return, and even now she has not been told that you are on your way home," I continued. "Your sister was quite upset over the fact that, in asking Miss Weston to visit her when she was in such need of a companion she entirely forgot the disagreement between you a few years ago."

"Disagreement!" he almost shouted, pulling himself up in his chair. "Why, what on earth are you talking about, man? We had no disagreement, I tell you! Nothing of the sort. I suppose Florence told you that, but she knew nothing about it at all. I went away because Annie thought I ought to; but she was mistaken, poor girl! If I had stayed at home I shouldn't be in this condition now, but she thought it was for the best. Poor little woman, she tried so hard to do the best thing for me and—look at me now! Look at me, Ware! But she must not be disturbed under any circumstances. You say she does not know I am coming home. She must not be allowed to know it. As I told you, I shall not stay there long, and there is no need of her knowing that I am in the house. I shall not see her, Ware," he almost sobbed. "I'm not fit to see her! I'm not fit to see her, man!"

The poor fellow's distress was so great that, a moment later, as I stood by his side at the door, I could not resist laying my hand on his shoulder and saying gently:

"Why don't you brace up, Mr. Carney? It isn't too late by any means. Just think of all that life has to offer you. You are a man of great wealth, the head of one of the best known families in the country, and everything that heart could wish for lies before you. Think it over, old man, think it over! Think of your sister, and—and—Miss Weston, and yourself, Carney; yourself, above all else, and leave the confounded stuff alone!"

As I uttered the last words he recoiled from me as if I had been the plague and muttered hoarsely, "My God, Ware, you don't think I am drunk, do you?"

Before I could reply he had hurried through the door, down the stairs and into the street.

CHAPTER IV.

Little Bobbs.

I followed him as rapidly as possible, hoping to overtake him and, at least, persuade him to return to my office until his excitement had cooled somewhat, but I reached the street only in time to see him turn the corner and mingle with the bustling crowd.

At the same instant a little man, not over five feet in height, and dressed in coarse drab, Norfolk jacket and tightly fitting trousers, turned in hurriedly from the opposite direction and collided with me with some violence.

"Beg pardon, sir," he panted, recovering himself with an effort and pulling off his cap respectfully. "Beg pardon, sir. I'm looking for Mr. Ware's offices, sir. Mr. Frederick Ware, sir. Is this the place, sir?" and he placed his hand on his chest and gasped noisily in his endeavor to catch his breath.

"Mr. Ware's office is upstairs," I replied, "and I am Mr. Ware. Who are you?"

"Thank ye, sir," he said gratefully, an expression of relief lighting up his face. "I'm Bobbs, sir. Little Bobbs, they calls me, sir." Still holding his cap in his hand he pulled his forelock and bowed with the grace of an east-side dancing master.

"Very well, Bobbs," I said, completely puzzled. "Now what do you want?"

"Why, I want Mr. Carney, of course, sir," he replied. "I'm his man, you know, sir, and he told me to meet him here in half an hour."

"So you are Mr. Carney's servant, eh?" I queried.

He nodded respectfully and touched his forelock again.

"Well," I continued, "Mr. Carney has gone and you won't be able to overtake him, so there is no use in your trying. Moreover, I want to see you myself in the office for a few minutes."

He followed me upstairs and sat down gingerly on the edge of a chair, twirling his cap between his hands and twiddling his thumbs nervously. I watched him for a moment in silence and then, an idea striking me, I unlocked the small cupboard in my desk, took out a bottle and a glass and, placing them before him, said solicitously: "You are completely exhausted, Bobbs; better take a little of this."

His face was perfectly frank and honest as he said, politely, "Thank ye kindly, sir, but I never touch it. I'll be all right in a minute, sir."

I returned the bottle and glass to their places, fully satisfied with the result of my little experiment and convinced that the fellow had spoken the truth and could be relied upon in every way.

"How long have you been in Mr. Carney's employ?" I asked, as I turned the key in the lock.

"Three years, come next autumn," he replied promptly.

"And did you never drink anything in your life, Bobbs?" I continued, for I was working out a definite line of questions.

"Well, sir," he rejoined, rather uncomfortably I thought, "I can't say as I've always been teetotal, sir, an' I used to take a drop now and then and again, sir. But since Mr. Carney got this way, sir, I gave it up entirely. It wouldn't do for me to be drinkin' now, you know, sir."

"No, it wouldn't," I said emphatically. "You are quite right, Bobbs, and you are a faithful fellow to give it up as you have."

"Thank ye, sir," said Bobbs.

"How long has Mr. Carney been in this condition?" I asked.

Bobbs looked at me in an undecided fashion for a moment and then blurted out, "Why, I don't know, sir, as I ought to be talkin' of his affairs so much, sir. It don't seem to me as it's quite right, sir."

I appreciated the fellow's devotion and loyalty to his master's interests and hastened to reassure him.

"It's all right, Bobbs," I said. "You may talk to me perfectly freely for I understand everything. You know, Mr. Carney himself was here for some time this morning."

Bobbs looked relieved and proceeded without further diffidence.

"Why, I should say, sir, it's goin' on about two years now. Ye know, he had some trouble or other on his mind when he went away, sir, an' it seemed to prey on him more an' more all the time. After a while he began gettin' in with those people, which I suppose was a relief to him and kept his thoughts off the other thing. At first it was only occasionally when he got to feelin' specially downhearted, but it wasn't long before he was with 'em all the time, sir. I begged and begged him to keep away from 'em, for you know as well as I do, sir, that only one thing could come of it, but he wouldn't listen to me and things kept goin' from bad to worse.

"At the beginning he kept up his interest in the business pretty well, but finally he lost all track of that, and then it wasn't many months before he couldn't attend to it whether he wanted to or not. That was the time I quit drinkin', sir, for I saw that he needed every minute of my time, day and night, or at least that he might need it.

"His neglectin' the business as he did wasn't any harm, you know, sir, for it's so well managed that it could almost run itself, but I did wish that he had worked off his bad feelin's in the office, 'stead of the way he did. My heart aches for him all the time, sir," continued the faithful fellow, brushing away a tear with his knuckle, "but he got so obstinate that nobody could do a thing with him an', anyway, I could have managed him myself if anyone living could."

"You think there is no chance for him now, Bobbs?" I inquired anxiously.

"Not one in a million, sir," answered Bobbs, sadly. "He's too far gone now, sir. He was takin' the cure for a time an' we began to have some hopes of him, but it wasn't any use, an' the first thing we knew he was as bad as ever."

"I wonder he came back at all," I remarked. "I shouldn't have thought he would have felt inclined to."

"I didn't think he'd come, myself," said Bobbs, "but he insisted upon it, and, as I told you a minute ago, there's no changing him now when he once gets an idea in his head, so we packed up and came. He said he had some matters to attend to with you that he must see about at once, sir."

"Yes," I replied, "he arranged certain affairs with me this morning."

"Well," said Bobbs, "I'm glad that's done, for it will be a great load off his mind."

"Where do you suppose he has gone now?" I asked. "He left here very hurriedly and I wonder if he will get into trouble." My calmness of mind was due to the fact that, under the circumstances, I should not have cared if he had broken his neck.

"Oh! he'll get back to the hotel, sir," returned Bobbs confidently. "He told me to get the tickets for to-night and a few other things he needed and then meet him here, or at the hotel if he had left here. You know he is going home to-night, sir."

"Yes," I said, "but he tells me he does not expect to stay there long. Do you know what his plans are?"

"I haven't the slightest idea, sir," said Bobbs. "He never tells anyone what he is going to do, and he's in such a bad way now that I fancy he's as likely to go one way as another, sir. But I'll stick to him, sir; you may be sure of that. I must be going now for he may need me. You know, sir, he's not always as bad as you've seen him to-day. It's only at times, sir, that he gets like this."

"I should hope so," I returned. "And you think he will reach the hotel safely?"

"No doubt about that, sir," said Bobbs. "If he has any trouble or should get—er—dizzy or anything, he'll take a cab, sir. The way he can keep his head is wonderful, sir."

He had risen to go as I asked my last question.

"Bobbs," I said, earnestly, "I want you to tell me something. What, in heaven's name, does Mr. Carney drink, to keep him in this condition?"

"What does he drink, sir?" exclaimed Bobbs in a half frightened tone and viewing me with evident and sudden suspicion. "Why, I thought you knew, sir! I thought you knew!" and before I could stop him, he, like his master, had rushed out of the office into the street.

[To be continued.]

BECKER KILLED GIRL

Elmhurst Suspect Alone Slew Amelia Staffeldt.

HE IS POSITIVELY IDENTIFIED.

Police Force Confession From Prisoner Held For the Murder of Fifteen-year-old Girl In Wild Flower Patch.

NEW YORK, May 29.—Telling a story of sinister detail and revealing an almost unbelievable depravity of character, Henry Becker, who has been under arrest on suspicion for three days, confessed he had murdered Amelia Charlotta Staffeldt, fifteen years old, in a field in the outskirts of Elmhurst, where she was picking dandelions.

In the hope he would escape the electric chair, despite the fact he had been arrested before on the charge of attacking a girl, he admitted that the story he told on Friday beside the coffined body of the murdered girl was a myth and that he had not met "the other man," whom he had accused of the murder, until within a few feet of Mrs. Emily Simonson's home in Train Meadows road. A charge of murder was made against Becker in the Flushing court this morning.

Talking to Detective Galvin, Becker said:

"Well, I do not want to go to the electric chair for telling the truth. What will you do to me if I tell just what happened?"

"Oh," said Galvin, "you will be sent to a hospital for the insane. You won't go to the electric chair."

"Then I'll tell you," said Becker slowly. "I killed her." With that he shrank back and eyed his captors. "That story about my 'pal' killing the girl was a lie. No one was with me when I struck the girl."

"Why did you lie about it?" he was asked.

"Well, because I was afraid I would be sent to the chair. You see, I was tired that morning, and after I got to Elmhurst from Maspeth I went up into the meadow and lay down. I do not know how long I slept, but I was awakened by the blowing of a whistle. I guess it was 1 o'clock. As I rolled over I saw the girl not far away picking dandelions. I watched her awhile. She looked very sweet and pretty, and I thought I would like to kiss her.

"I went over and spoke to her, but she was much frightened. Then I tried to put my arm around her, and she struggled. She said she would call the police, but I said: 'Now, don't be afraid. I won't hurt you.' With that she yelled once. Then I grabbed her around the neck, and, reaching down, I picked up a stone and struck her once on the head. She fell to her knees, and I pushed her face down into the mud. I noticed the knife, because when she struggled with me she had tried to strike me with it, but I had knocked it from her hand.

"She groaned as she lay there, and I was afraid she would call the police, so I picked up the knife and struck her several times in the neck. I looked around, but I was sure no one saw me.

"When I got on the road I met a stranger. I told him I had been fighting, and when I saw Mrs. Simonson's house I knew there was a pump there, where I could wash off my hands. About dark I went to Corona, and I slept all night in the station."

Frisco Gang Indicted.

SAN FRANCISCO, May 29.—The grand jury last night returned bribery indictments against President Patrick Calhoun of the United railroads, Thornwall Mullally, assistant to Calhoun; Attorneys Tirey L. Ford and W. M. Abbott of the legal department of the United railroads, Mayor Eugene E. Schmitz, Abraham Ruef, President Louis Glass of the Pacific States Telephone and Telegraph company and Theodore V. Halsey, formerly an agent of that corporation. Ruef, Schmitz, Calhoun, Mullally, Ford and Abbott are charged with bribery in connection with the fixing of the gas company's rate and with receiving $5,000 in the United railroads franchise deal.

May Irwin Marries Her Manager.

CLAYTON, N. Y., May 28.—May Irwin, the actress, was married at her summer home on Irwin Island, in the St. Lawrence river, yesterday afternoon to Kurt Eisfeldt, for three years her manager and press agent. The ceremony was performed by Rev. Theodore Payden, rector of Christ Episcopal church.

Ethel Barrymore Better.

CHICAGO, May 28.—The condition of Miss Ethel Barrymore, who is ill of a cold on the lungs at the Auditorium hotel, is said to be much improved. Her physician believes that danger of pneumonia is past and that Miss Barrymore will be able to leave her room within a day or two.

Jury Acquits Salem Boy.

SALEM, Mass., May 27.—Edgar Weston Meikle, the seventeen-year-old lad who has been on trial here on a charge of murdering his father, Charles S. G. Meikle, by shooting, was found not guilty by the jury at 2:30 o'clock in the morning.